

**Prospects and Challenges of Rural Tourism: Case
study of Bhujikot homestay, Tanahun**

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In Partial Fulfillment of The requirements for the Degree of
the
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in
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**By
SANGHARSHA BHATTARAI
Central Department of Rural Development,
Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu
TU, Regd. No.: 6-1-40-1415-98
Exam Roll No.: 3980
August, 2019**

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Prospects and Challenges of Rural Tourism: Case study of homestay of Bhujikot Tanahun** submitted to the Central Department of Rural Development, Tribhuvan University, is entirely my original work prepared under the guidance and supervision of my supervisor. I have made due acknowledges to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this thesis. The result of this thesis have not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purpose. I hereby assure that no part of the content of this thesis has been published in any form before.

Sangharsha Bhattarai
TU Regd. No. 6-1-40-1415-98

Date: 2076-4-14 BS
(2019-7-30 AD)

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Sangharsha Bhattarai has prepared this dissertation entitled '**Prospects of Rural Tourism: Case study of homestay of Bhujikot Tanahun**' for the partial fulfillment of Master of Arts in Rural Development under my supervision and guidance. To the best of my knowledge, the study is original and therefore, I recommend it for final evaluation.

Prajwal Man Pradhan, Supervisor
Lecturer and Academic Coordinator
Central Department of Rural Development
Kirtipur, Kathamandu

Date: 2076-4-16 (BS)

2019-8-1 (AD)



TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय
CENTRAL DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
ग्रामीण विकास केन्द्रीय विभाग

विभागीय प्रमुखको कार्यालय
कीर्तिपुर, काठमाडौं, नेपाल।
Office of the Head of Department
Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ref. No. :.....

Approval Sheet

Date मिति 2076-4-23 (BS)
2019-8-8 (AD)

We certify that this thesis entitled **“Prospects of Rural Tourism: Case study of homestay of Bhujikot Tanahun”** submitted by Mr. Sangharsha Bhattarai to the Central Department of Rural Development, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Arts in Rural Development has been found satisfactory in scope and quality. Therefore, we accept this thesis as a part of the said degree.

Thesis Evaluation Committee

Prof. Dr. Pushpa Kamal Subedi

Head of Department

Dr. Umesh Acharya

External Examiner

Mr Prajwal Man Pradhan,

Thesis Supervisor

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Abstract

Tourism is a sustainable industry for a country like Nepal, where though modern amenities are not available one can enjoy diverse natural beauty. This study, undertaken as a part of the academic research, explored the rural tourism prospects of Bhujikot, located in Tanahun district. Historically a Gurung and Magar majority settlement, Bhujikot, along with its 3 neighboring villages offers a scenic package of natural beauty as well as cultural warmth. Bhujikot, one of the four village settlements in the study area, lies in the hilly region of the country, thus ensuring a balanced climate and pleasant weather.

The study was conducted with the qualitative approach wherein the key participants were selected based on their background and experience in the subject matter. Interviews were conducted with the local residents, homestay owners, and subject matter experts as key informants. Both primary as well as secondary data were collected analyzed.

The study assessed that, with rich cultural heritage, and diverse flora and fauna, there is a huge prospect in developing Bhujikot as a homestay destination if some of the basic infrastructure along with touristic awareness is developed in the area. There are some prominent challenges, mostly related to infrastructure and awareness of the locals, but with the decent amount of effort and investment, Bhujikot can really present itself as an ideal touristic destination providing authentic cuisines and warm hospitality – all with the background of Annapurna range of mountains.

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Abbreviations

ISPs	Internet Service Providers
KII	Key informant interview
NRs	Nepalese Rupees
NTC	Nepal Telecom Corporation
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
VDCs	Village Development Committees
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Nepal is a beautiful country bestowed with abundance of natural beauty and diverse flora and fauna. Apart from hosting a wide range of geographical terrain, Nepal also inhabits diverse culture and tradition. From the top of the world to the plain fields, the country has a lot to offer, not only for foreign visitors but also for the citizens. Being in a developing stage, the country may not outright offer luxurious accommodation and amenities in all of the region, but it certainly can offer warm welcome and pleasant hospitality in almost any region which is topped by the serene and mostly unspoiled natural locations.

After visiting various locations within the country, I realized that the place I grew up could be an ideal touristic attraction because several destinations in hilly region have successfully implemented the homestay services. This not only enables the residents to receive additional income to support their livelihood but also allows them to interact with the external world while strengthening and protecting their cultural heritage. If implemented successfully, this approach could deliver two fold benefits to the local community.

In this context, this research idea was initiated and it intends to explore the possibilities and prospects of establishing a systematic homestay service in Bhujikot Tanahun, where the author comes from. The author intends to explore the strengths of the location, namely natural resources and cultural heritage as well as amenities and infrastructure already in place, while analyzing feasibility of establishing new services.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Recent policies and planning have included tourism as one of the priority sectors in economic development. Tourism not only increases the inflow of foreign currency into the country, but also revitalizes the local community in terms of knowledge exchange, cultural exposure, social awareness and most importantly, gaining financial independence.

In this regard, the Tourism Policy devised in 2065 has taken rural tourism as one of the priority areas primarily by means of implementing successful models of homestays in

new locations. The government has also introduced Home Stay Operation Procedure 2067 which provides guidelines and regulations for establishing and operating home stay services. As of 2017, a total of 283 houses have been involved in providing 554 rooms in 10 districts of the country (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2018).

However, despite efforts from policy makers and community, the rural tourism, in the form of homestays have not been implemented in an extent possible. There are a lot to learn from the success stories and a lot of people need to be trained. Apart from this, the successful models need to be standardized wherever possible and adapted to the target location so that the models can be replicated with efficiency wherever required by the community.

In this regard, this study attempts to explore the possible prospects of implementing a successful model of homestay in Bhujikot Tanahun by analyzing the available resources, efforts applied till date, and plans and projects at hand in the local government.

This study intends to answer the following research questions:

- What are the prospects of rural tourism in Bhujikot?
- What are the challenges for tourism development?
- What can be the role of local government and the community in successful implementation of homestay in Bhujikot?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to explore the prospect of rural tourism in Bhujikot.

The specific objectives

- To identify tourist attractions of Bhujikot,
- To examine the components and challenges of homestay in Bhujikot, and
- To assess the role of the community in the promotion of rural tourism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Being a developing country, Nepal can tremendously benefit from tourism, especially if the communities in the local level are empowered and facilitated in establishing homestays so that the communities are economically independent. This study, by

focusing on one particular location, attempts to explore the potential of Bhujikot Tanahun.

The significance of this study, in particular, are as follows:

- Initiate a discussion and support the ongoing conversation on the prospects of rural tourism in Bhujikot.
- Help produce a knowledge artifact which can be referred by the target community and other communities to gain an insight from Bhujikot.
- Help the local government in the process of planning and budgeting as well as developing tourism programs in the region

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Being a purely academic endeavor, this research has limitations regarding the coverage and depth of study. As exploratory methodology will be implemented in the limited time frame, the collected data and subsequent analysis will depend upon the selected participants' knowledge and viewpoint. While utmost care will be provided in integrating diverse sources and information, the findings may not be all inclusive and comprehensive.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Tourism

UNWTO defines tourism as a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and the hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home (UNWTO, n.d.). As a steadily growing industry, tourism has covered the globe and has become one of the major revenue sources for several countries. At the heart of any definition of tourism is the person we conceive to be a tourist. As Nash (1981) postulates, from this point of view, one is inclined to think of tourism in terms of the motives and practices of a type of human being who, first emerged in the Western world in the 18th century in the form of a young English gentleman traveling abroad with his tutor. The author further adds, some people think of the tourist as a kind of traveler, the definition also has its problems,

the principal one being that too many specifications have to be added in order to rule out people like the traveling salesman. Thus citing Cohen (1974), the author adds, in order to make this definition "work," argues that tourism involves voluntary, non-recurrent, novelty-seeking, temporary traveling or sojourning. The possible appeal of this conception to our intuition is negated by its lack of parsimony and also (as it turns out) its lack of direct linkages with anthropological or other theories (Nash, 1981).

Over the recent past, tourism has grown rapidly and has also been diverse in terms of operations, delivery and services provided. It has thus become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism at present constitutes various forms and destinations which are being explored by all types of tourists. With the growing movement and increase economic activities, tourism has become one of the key drivers as well as indicator for socio-economic progress. At present, the economic volume of tourism competes with that of oil exports and thus indicates the size of this industry. This evolution also hints at the diversification of services provided in tourism.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), International tourism will continue to grow in the period 2010-2030, but at a more moderate pace than the past decades, with the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide increasing by an average 3.3% a year. As a result, an average 43 million additional international tourists will join the tourism marketplace every year. At the projected pace of growth, arrivals will pass the 1 billion mark by 2012, up from 940 million in 2010. By 2030, arrivals are expected to reach 1.8 billion, meaning that in two decades' time, 5 million people will be crossing international borders for leisure, business or other purposes such as visiting friends and family every day. (UNWTO, 2011)

A survey indicates that, as compared to 2008, the worldwide distribution of travel spending by region for 2020 is going to see 32% increase in 2020 is expected to be in Asia. (Statista Research Department, 2010)

2.2 Tourism in Nepal

Nepal, situated between the two Asian giants China on the North and India on the South, is a small country with extremely diverse geo political attributes and has a lot to offer to its visitors. With the total area of 147181 sq. km, and the mean breadth of just 193 kilometers north to south, it encompasses three distinct geographical terrain. The capital city, located roughly at the center lies in the hilly region at the altitude of 1400 meters above sea level, and is also the single entry point for flying in patrons.

Tourism is a major industry in Nepal, or at least it promises to be. Given the increase in international visitors, the potential to expand this sector to generate more income, employment and other benefits is enormous, considering the low level of tourism development in the country. Due to the economic significance of badly needed foreign exchange, the government's tourism philosophy is to increase tourist arrivals, and subsequently hopes to generate more income, employment, and tax revenues. (Thapa, 2003)

With the rapidly transforming world, economic change means many rural areas (in Western Europe) are facing dilemmas about their future. Changing agricultural practices have led to rural unemployment, and the growth of food surpluses has forced European governments to introduce measures to curtail agricultural production. Many rural areas have suffered from emigration, often of the youngest and most able, and this depopulation has eroded the vitality of rural services and of rural communities. As a result, increased attention has been focused on rural development issues. One particular focus has been to identify ways of encouraging the diversification of rural economic activities, and tourism is one activity receiving heightened attention. Similar trends are evident in developed countries elsewhere (Bramwell, 2009).

2.3 Types of Tourism in Nepal

Despite being a relatively small sized country, Nepal flaunts a wide range of geo-social mixture. Nepal accommodates eight of the fourteen tallest mountains above 8000 meters. Nepal offers a wide range of touristic attractions – from casual sight-seeing to extreme mountaineering, from authentic cuisine to global dishes, from herbs to birds unique to Nepal.

Mountain tourism is one of the strongest aspect of tourism in Nepal and hence considered to be one of the strongest attractions. It is estimated that mountains share around 15-20 % of the global tourism market. In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2002- the international year of mountains. For all the activities that are conducted in Nepal, trekking is the most prominent, and hence mountain tourism can be considered as the key factor in getting quality tourists to the country.

The diversity of Nepal's geographical and cultural terrain makes this country ideal for trekking. From the easiest trekking routes, popularly known as royal trekking, to the one of the toughest trails can be found in Nepal. Trekking in Nepal provides an

opportunity to observe the local culture of the people and enjoy the beauty of nature untouched by the hustle and bustle of urban life. Depending upon the expertise level and expectations, tourists can choose from a wide variety of options – not only in terms of the route and terrain, but also the modality of the trekking.

Wildlife tourism is yet another attraction of the country. Between the short range of geographical distance, tourists can see a wide variety of wild animals. As Koshi Tappu is well known for bird's paradise, Chitwan is known for elephants and Bardiya is the hub for tiger sightings. Once near the mountains, elusive snow leopard has lured tourists since long, and the Himalayan pheasant, the national bird of Nepal, Danphe is one of a kind.

Despite being a relatively new area of tourism globally, eco-tourism and rural tourism seem to have deep roots in Nepali culture. We can trace its roots to the pre-historic period when saints and sages used to travel from one settlement to another in search of knowledge and wisdom.

2.4 Eco Tourism

As environment is an emergent issue of the 21st century, it is nearly impossible to conceive an idea of a business in the tourism industry without considering the environmental factor. Tourism industry, in large part of the world, is more or less synonymous to the environmental paradigm, and this has been reflected from the tourism entrepreneurs' aspect as well. This factor even closely relates to rural tourism. Everybody is conscious everywhere that one must be respectful and careful with environment. One should preserve Nature as original as possible, which is the same as keeping authenticity or diversity. These two terms have turned out to be important factor for tourism resort choice. Unspoilt, autochthonous, natural environment has turned out to be the most important authenticity element. Rural tourism is growing and developing as an integral part of the environment, in a sustainable way, keeping the identity of the locality and recovering lost activities, such as subsistence farming, rural tourism is in the country, not in the town (M. Victoria Sanagustín Fons, 2010). In general, ecotourism is used to describe tourism that is nature-based, sustainably managed, conservation-supporting and environmentally educated. It is seen as a type of alternative tourism as opposed to other forms of tourism such as mass tourism, and aims to preserve the integrity of both the social and physical environment. Ideally, then,

it has attributes of sociocultural and ecological integrity as well as responsibility and sustainability (Burns, 2004).

Environmental benefits include support for preservation of landscape and stimulus for the preservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment. In this sense, new environmental regulations have been put into practice to preserve the environmental assets, and, according to our interviewees, local governments are working hard in this area to adopt these new laws in order to control the use of the landscape and to reduce the damage caused not only by intensive visitor use (skiing, hiking, rock climbing, or riding), but by vandals who abuse Nature and enjoy destroying beautiful places and landscapes, with no other motivation than pleasure. On one side of the debate in rural studies, there are those who are happy to describe rural areas as possessing to a greater or lesser degree characteristics that distinguish them from urban areas. It is recognized that rural areas are not identical and some are quite similar to urban areas, but it is suggested that to varying degrees rural areas tend to have four main qualities: relatively low physical densities of people, buildings and activities; less social and cultural heterogeneity; less economic diversity; and a comparative physical isolation from general economic, social and political networks (Bramwell, 2009). The pursuit for sustainability in tourism is particularly important for countries that are economically dependent on tourism and therefore need to develop a mechanism that ensures continuation of the tourism trade. Kadt holds the opinion that making sustainability the focus of alternative development may be the most productive way to move forward in terms of tourism policies (Burns, 2004). Burns further cites Nash in stating that a problem with this ideal is the reality that development tends to address economic conditions before social or environmental ones. The idea of environmental conservation through tourism must not and cannot be divorced from development issues and, therefore, to satisfy the multitude of interests involved now and in the future, tourism needs to be sustainable. Ecotourism is one form of tourism that attempts this (Burns, 2004).

2.4 Anthropological Tourism

Since long, tourism has been viewed as closely connected with the notions of development. The tourism industry has been taken as a strong driving force of development, particularly in the form of small-scale entrepreneurships of the developing societies and anthropologists have contributed to the tourism literature in

discussions on the many theories surrounding the issue of development (Burns, 2004). While it might indicate a form of dependency and uncertainty, tourism plays a strong role in local economy. Other authors, however, prefer to tackle the notion of tourism as a complex and diversely interrelated matter. The approach, as discussed by Prezeclawski in 1993 stressed that tourism is a very complex phenomenon, encompassing issues that are: economic (related with the market forces such as supply and demand); psychological (related with the aspect of social psychology indicating on the entrepreneurship as stressors and also the factors of motivation); social (related to the roles, relationships and responsibilities); and cultural (related to the retention, transmission of knowledge and at the same time local traditions for which tourism is a major driving force). Because of this complexity, a holistic and interdisciplinary approach seemed to be better in providing a integrated view of tourism, which not only creates impact on social economy but also has implications in culture, tradition and social values. As in the present context, many forms of tourism is being developed and the modes of delivery is being evolved. One of the perspectives in this domain is the perspective of anthropological tourism, which, is closely connected with ecotourism, which in fact arose from 'sustainable tourism', a term that has been in use for over a decade (Burns, 2004).

It is well evident that anthropological view point is crucial in a sustainable tourism practices, and it particularly tries to study the relationships between the hosts and guests, and how the relationship changes and evolves over time. One way of using this hat of tourism would be to develop the tourism packages in such a way that anthropological studies are promoted and encouraged. As tourism itself is an applied area of social entrepreneurship, anthropological tourism can play a significant role in establishing the foundation of sustainability in the community. Ultimately, says (Burns, 2004), anthropology is about people and so is tourism. Anthropologists are both tourism participants and observers, whether they like it or not. In anthropology, the wide range of possibilities for the study of tourism is only just being realised. It is an exciting and challenging time. It is also an important one, as anthropology and tourism need to be engaged correctly for the future of both.

In his notable paper, Nash (1981) states that tourism defined as leisure activity requiring travel, exists at all levels of sociocultural complexity. The spread of these travels would seem to be bound up with the ubiquity of leisure and travel. From an economic perspective, one might account for this in terms of surplus and trade, but that is only

one point of view; other factors also should be considered, especially when the travelers are not from too far or are not traveling without a definitive purpose. According to the transactional view, tourism may be seen to have effects on tourist-generating societies, host societies, and any transcultural social systems in which it is embedded. These effects are seen not only to be originated from the tourists and their activities alone, but also from the touristic infrastructure that serve them. It seems, however, that the experts have not given enough focus on the tourist generating societies themselves. A new global perspective thus requires us to observe the scene from a broader view which takes into account not only the host society but also the tourist originating society. These social scientists have, not unexpectedly, tended to reveal a kind of "knee-jerk" response to the "imposition" of tourism on their favorite societies, i.e., those in the preindustrial or Third World (Nash, 1981). The somewhat prescientific conclusion that most of them have reached is that tourism is "bad" for such societies. Such a conclusion is supported by one of the more careful and sophisticated studies to date, that by the economist Bryden (1973). Focusing on the Commonwealth Caribbean and using a straight cost-benefit type of analysis, he concludes that "a perfectly recognizable 'economic' case can be made against tourist development." He points out that without even referring to "transcendental" or "social" costs one can raise serious questions about the value of tourist development for a preindustrial society (Nash, 1981).

2.5 Cultural Tourism

Community is a very elusive and vague term. It is used to refer to not only a locality such as a village or a settlement but also a network of relationships such as communities in the virtual world. According to *The Community Tourism Guide*, for example, a community can be described as "a mutually supportive, geographically specific, social unit such as a village or tribe where people identify themselves as community members and where there is usually some form of communal decision-making" (Salazar, 2012). Such a notion of community evokes a group of people who have something in common and who are actively engaged with one another in a benign fashion, and such sentiments may be used rhetorically to generate some kind of shared identity where it was only latent. While the existing discussions have focused more on community based tourism practices, the most promising way of developing these packages could be to develop as cultural tourism. The main strength of this form of tourism, lies in its potential to empower rural communities and to make a significant contribution to the development

and eradication of poverty (Salazar, 2012). Activities in the cultural tourism approach are designed from community initiative and implemented through community consensus other than prevailing centrally planned approach. This is the reason why it is believed that it may cause less negative effects and disruption of rural cultures. As established earlier, cultural tourism is also attempts to create a more sustainable tourism industry focusing on the hosting communities in terms of planning and maintaining tourism development. As a particular alternative form of tourism, community based tourism also suggests a symbolic or mutual relationship where the tourist is not given central priority but becomes an equal part of the system. This notion of tourism where the host is not totally bowed down to the tourist indicates a different perspective because it places the focus on the host, rather than the tourist. The scholars have suggested that the planning and implementation of community based tourism under the umbrella of cultural tourism should be realistic taking into account the operational, structural and cultural limits to community participation. Participation of the locals is essential for achieving the global goal of sustainable development, however this could be challenging as such involvement often involves a shift of power from local authorities to local actors. While complete local control may not always be feasible, or practical in a lot of cases, this should be the underlying principle of the approach, nevertheless. This calls for a drive in initiating fundamental education and training in target communities to accompany tourism development so that the local communities can develop strategies for receiving and interacting with tourists as well as displaying themselves and their visible culture in an effective manner by practicing the right balance between economic gain and cultural integrity (Salazar, 2012).

2.6 Rural Tourism

It was the pressure of visitors on rural areas in developed nations that led to the development of many of the early ideas about sustainable tourism. Most notably, a number of influential concepts of alternative tourism were developed in the Alpine mountain regions of Europe in the 1970s as an answer to the severe development pressures being put upon rural communities and environments by the rise of intensive winter sports and summer vacationing. It is also the case that many of the new projects and initiatives in sustainable tourism are also to be found in the countryside (Bramwell, 2009). The role of the authorities and the ruling government in devising relevant policies also is crucial. As communities become increasingly tourism dependent, it is

likely that citizens will become increasingly cognizant of negative community impacts, and these negative perceptions will overshadow the positive influences of tourism on a community (Nancy G Mcgehee, 2004). This is primarily led by the lack of resources in the rural level despite high volume of information available freely in the public domain. While involvement and participation of communities in the tourism industry can be viewed in the decision making process and in the sharing of tourism benefits, community participation through employment brings more economic benefits directly to the household level. On the other hand, participation is also open to a variety of interpretations arising from the fact that a ladder encompassing different levels of participation exists which often range from 'only being told of' to being able to influence or determine every aspect of the tourism development (Sudesh Prabhakaran, 2014).

From a pragmatic standpoint, several studies in the past have further supported the assertion that that informing residents via public information campaigns about the various types of tourism development that exist should be a tourism industry priority. This will lead the community to make informed decisions about the kinds and levels of tourism development most attractive to them, the residents should also be given the opportunity to learn about tourism's positive and negative economic, social, cultural, and environmental implications and the need for planned and managed tourism development and growth (Nancy G Mcgehee, 2004).

Rural tourism, possibly, a variant of ecotourism, refers to the touristic activity where the visitors actively participate in the rural lifestyle. Villages, usually eager to welcome new visitors, take the guests into a setting which very much coincides with their own daily life. The services and amenities offered to the visitors are indicative of their native culture and lifestyle. With the advent of urban landscapes and increased population density in the cities, more people are looking forward to taking a different route to relaxation. They, instead of consuming modern services, these days, are seeking a more natural and rural setting. This form of tourism is also characterized by a sense of responsible traveling which means the travelers seeking this type of service are expected to be sensitive to the environment and usually intend to leave no trace behind. The visits to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas strive to be low-impact on environment and usually are set up in smaller scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides resources for nature conservation; directly benefits the economic development

and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights. Take only memories and leave only footprints is a very common slogan in protected areas. Tourist destinations are shifting to low carbon emissions following the trend of visitors more focused in being environmentally responsible adopting a sustainable behavior. (Kiper, 2013)

The very large number of previous studies on community participation, both theoretical and empirical, gives the scholar interest in this subject. Among the multidimensionality of all tourism studies, these visualizations of community participation are never general enough to offer a global perspective; as with the participation of rural tourism, commonly it is hard to assume collective truths (Sudesh Prabhakaran, 2014).

2.7 Homestay

Homestay is a mode of rural tourism where in the resident locals offer accommodation and food apart from other basic touristic welcoming activities in their own homes and communities. The guideline defines homestay as a service established privately or in a group with the objective of providing accommodation, food and other services to the tourists (Government of Nepal, 2010).

The sense and act of hospitality is a very sensitive and complex subject. It is delicate relationship where psychological tension is present, relating mainly to the fact that both guest and host, have to maintain their own dignity. Being a host does not refer to serving someone, in spite of what it looks like. Good hosts maintain and even heighten their dignity while showing their generosity in service and behavior, while also expecting the same from their guests. If is a difficult relationship, it is also very advantageous and convenient when the right balance is reached.

In the opinion of Derridá, hospitality is not simply welcoming a stranger at home, at one's own house, one's nation, one's town, although this could also be so. In the moment I become accessible and give a "welcome" to another person's otherness, I am in the position of host. Even war, rejection and xenophobia mean that I must deal with other people, and, therefore, I am open to others. Closing is just a reaction to the prior opening. From this point of view, hospitality comes first. To say that it "comes first" means that, even before being myself and exactly who I am. The arrival of the other must have established this relationship with myself. In other words, I cannot have a relationship with myself, with my "being at home". The arrival of the other has preceded my own self. (. . .) To a certain extent, I am a host of the other, and this

condition of host in which I am now the guest of the other, because I have taken him into my house, (. . .) this situation of being a host defines my responsibility. When I say, “Here I am”, I am responsible to the other. “Here I am” means that I am the other’s prisoner (. . .). It is a situation where there is tension. This hospitality is everything but serenity and easiness. I am a prisoner of the other, the other’s host, and ethics and moral have to be structured round being a host” (Derrida, 1996).

Among the differing contributions on rural tourism as proposed by the experts and scholars, there is a frequent concern that rural tourism should not be allowed to develop as the inevitable outcome of powerful and inexorable outside forces. These forces include the shifting and increasingly global pressures for economic restructuring and the commoditization of the countryside by external tourism interests as a retailed experience for tourist consumers. A new concern is emerging in the theory and practice of rural tourism which invests considerable importance in the economic well-being and cultural integrity of rural communities and in rural environmental stewardship. Increasing prominence is now given to rural communities and individual local residents and businesses and to their role and degree of control in shaping rural tourism in the context of external forces (Bramwell, 2009).

In Nepal, rural tourism and ecotourism is not a completely new phenomenon. With the establishment of Ghandruk village as the exemplary rural tourism destination and the follow up success, several villages have adopted the similar model. With the historic spots such as Ghandruk, Bandipur, Nuwakot etc, it was observed that relatively smaller steps were phenomenal in developing the local spot as a tourist destination. In recent times, however, as the road access and urbanization increased in previously rural localities, such as Bandipur, more communities residing in further outskirts of the highway started to adopt the rural as well as ecotourism mechanism, and hence homestay packages were established in places like Ghalegaun, Lamjung and Sirubari, Syangja.

In this context, Bhujikot, located in the Tanahun District can be considered as a suitable location the proposed location for the establishment of rural and ecotourism destination, especially by implementing systematic homestay services. This is a historic place, inhabited by the locals before the unification of the country was conducted by Prithvi Narayan Shah. Being an elevated hilltop, it was used by the then kings called the *Baisi Chaubisi* kings, as a strategic spot for wartime affairs. Administratively located within the Shuklagandaki Municipality of Tanahun, this region, particularly the Bhujikot area

is a mixture of mostly Gurung and Magar community. The villages, composed of four sub areas, are characterized by traditional small sized thatch roofed settlement with people mostly involved in agriculture and cattle farming.

This location, in its best days, provides a complete panorama of the Annapurna range, view of the Pokhara city to the north-west, and layered hills of Lamjung, constantly flowing serpentine flow of the Seti river to the South including the neo-urban settlement of Kotre, Dulegaunda, and Khairenitar lined up with the Prithvi highway, and also the Madi river towards the east.

2.8 Tourists Statistics in Nepal

Nepal has experienced a slow but continuous growth in the number of tourists visited. Number of tourist by purpose of visit is a major indicator for tourism sector output. This indicator is very useful for evaluation of characteristics, type and economic and social contributions made by tourists and to plan and manage infrastructure, services and market economy accordingly. It also shows inflow of high value tourists. Historical data shows that more than 50 percent of the tourist arrived with purpose of holiday celebration and pleasure. Year 2017 shows higher proportion (70 %) visited Nepal for holiday and pleasure followed by pilgrimage (15%), adventure (8%) and other purpose (7%) (Government of Nepal, 2018).

Indicators	2016	2017	% Change
Tourist Arrival by:			
Air	572563	760577	32.8
Land	180439	179641	-0.4
Total	753002	940218	25
Average Length of Stay	13.4	12.6	-6.0
Sex:			
Male	399091	509598	27.7
Female	353911	430620	21.7
By Age groups:			
0-15 years	29825	35332	18.5
16-30 years	154960	217143	40.1
31-45 years	218479	292827	34.0
46-60 years	199139	244342	22.7
61+ years	130627	141316	8.2
Not Specified	19972	9258	

Top Five Country of Nationality:			
Rank 1	India	India	
Rank 2	China	China	
Rank 3	Sri Lanka	USA	
Rank 4	USA	United Kingdom	
Rank 5	United Kingdom	Sri Lanka	
Purpose of Visit:			
Holiday/Pleasure	489452	658153	34.5
Pilgrimage	82830	141033	70.3
Trekking & Mountaineering	66490	75217	13.1
Official	21310	na	
Business	24322	na	
Conference/Conv.	12801	na	
Others	55797	65815	18.0

Table 1: Comparative summary of the tourists arrival in Nepal between 2016 and 2017 (Government of Nepal, 2018).

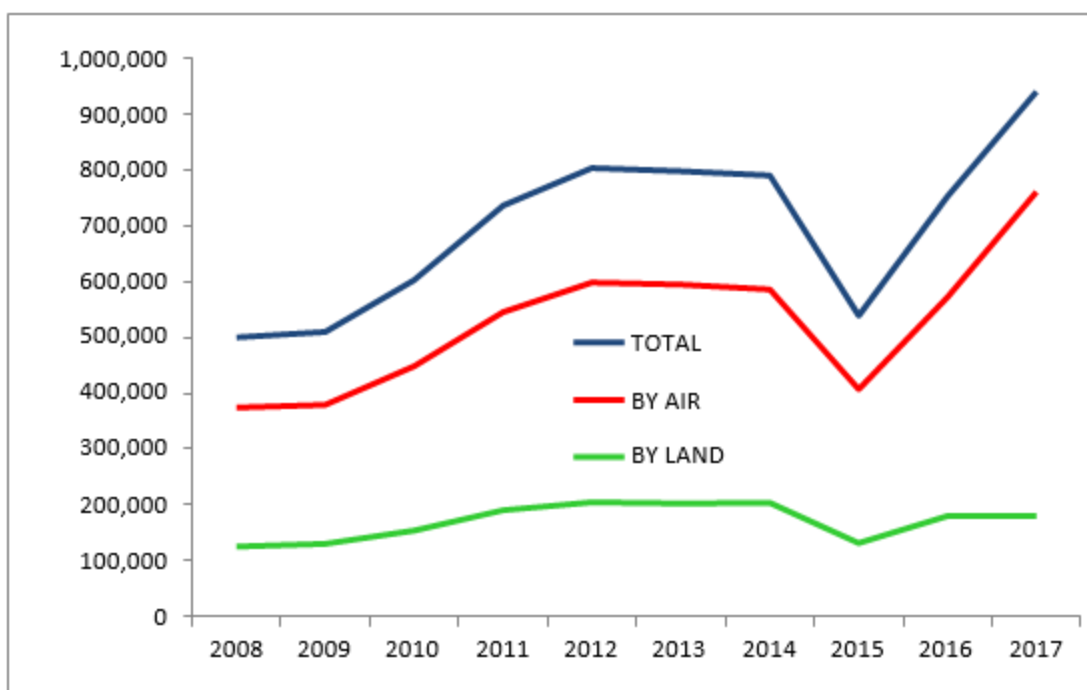


Figure 1: Tourist arrival in Nepal 2008 – 2017

Nepal is renowned for adventure tourism due to its prominent peaks. The number of expedition permitted teams has reached to 291 while 2277 in persons. Out of them 1225 succeeded summit to various peaks composed by 692 foreign and 533 Nepalese. The highest number of climbers comes from USA, Germany and United Kingdom respectively (Government of Nepal, 2018).

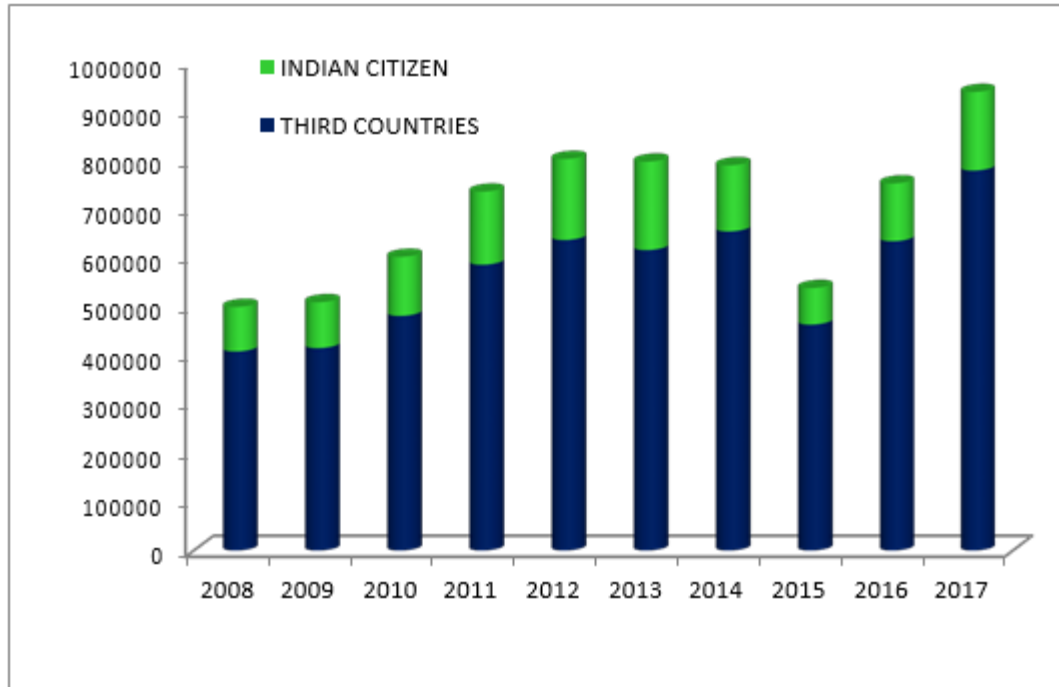


Figure 2: Tourists arrival by country, 2001-2017

Revenue from tourism sector is observed from foreign currency exchange made by tourists and tourism industries as proxy of income. All domestic contribution is not captured. Nepal Rastra Bank report shows total foreign currency exchange (less return) for 2016/017 stood at NRs. 58,526,918 thousand, (Around 551,000 thousand US\$). This is almost 40% higher than previous year 2015/016. This increase in currency income due to increase in tourist arrival brings per tourist per day expenditure at 54 USD (Government of Nepal, 2018).

According to the official statistics, as of 2017, a total of 1101 (star and tourist standard hotels) are operated in Nepal, with bed capacity 39833 per day. Travel agency, tour guide, tour operators, rafting agencies, trekking agencies and guides all are in increasing number of trend. In 2017 the number of registered travel agencies reached up to 3824 while the trekking agencies are at 2637.

District	Type	2015			2016			2017		
		No. of Affiliated House	No. of Room	No. of Bed	No. of Affiliated House	No. of Room	No. of Bed	No. of Affiliated Houses	No. of Rooms	No. of Bed
Kathmandu	Community	52	8	148	6	9	214	6	9	214
	Private	34	1	198	4	1	176	4	150	206
	Total	86	1	346	1	2	390	1	249	420
Kavre	Community	43	1	3	4	8	107	4	8	107
	Private	2	5	1	2	5	1	5	1	3
	Total	45	2	4	5	8	117	5	9	137
Lalitpur	Community	7	1	2	1	2	4	1	2	4
	Private	4	1	2	6	1	3	6	1	3
	Total	11	2	4	1	3	7	1	3	7
Mugu	Community	5	5	1	5	5	1	5	5	1
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	5	5	1	5	5	1	5	5	1
Nuwakot	Community	25	3	6	2	3	6	2	3	6
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	25	3	6	2	3	6	2	3	6
Ramechhap	Community	6	1	3	2	5	9	2	5	9
	Private	1	3	6	1	3	6	2	1	2
	Total	7	1	3	3	5	102	3	6	116
Chitwan	Community	7	1	2	7	1	2	7	1	2
	Private	2	4	6	2	4	6	2	4	6
	Total	9	1	3	9	1	3	9	1	3
Makwanpur	Community	7	1	3	7	1	3	7	1	3
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	7	1	3	7	1	3	7	1	3
Dhading	Community	5	9	1	5	9	1	5	9	1
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	6
	Total	5	9	1	5	9	1	6	1	2
Pyuthan	Community	17	3	6	1	1	3	1	1	3
	Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	17	3	6	1	1	3	1	1	3
Total	Community	1	2	451	2	3	650	2	354	650
	Private	4	1	240	5	1	228	6	200	298
Total		2	3	691	2	5	878	2	554	948

Table 2: Registered homestay in Nepal (Source: Department of Tourism, Government of Nepal)

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Conceptual Framework

In conceptualizing the study, we identify various factors which are independent in nature and other aspects which are determined by the interplay of the aforementioned independent variables. As tourism encompasses various environmental factors as well as human elements, we understand this phenomenon an output of policies and practices as they interact with human efforts in obtaining the desired outcomes.

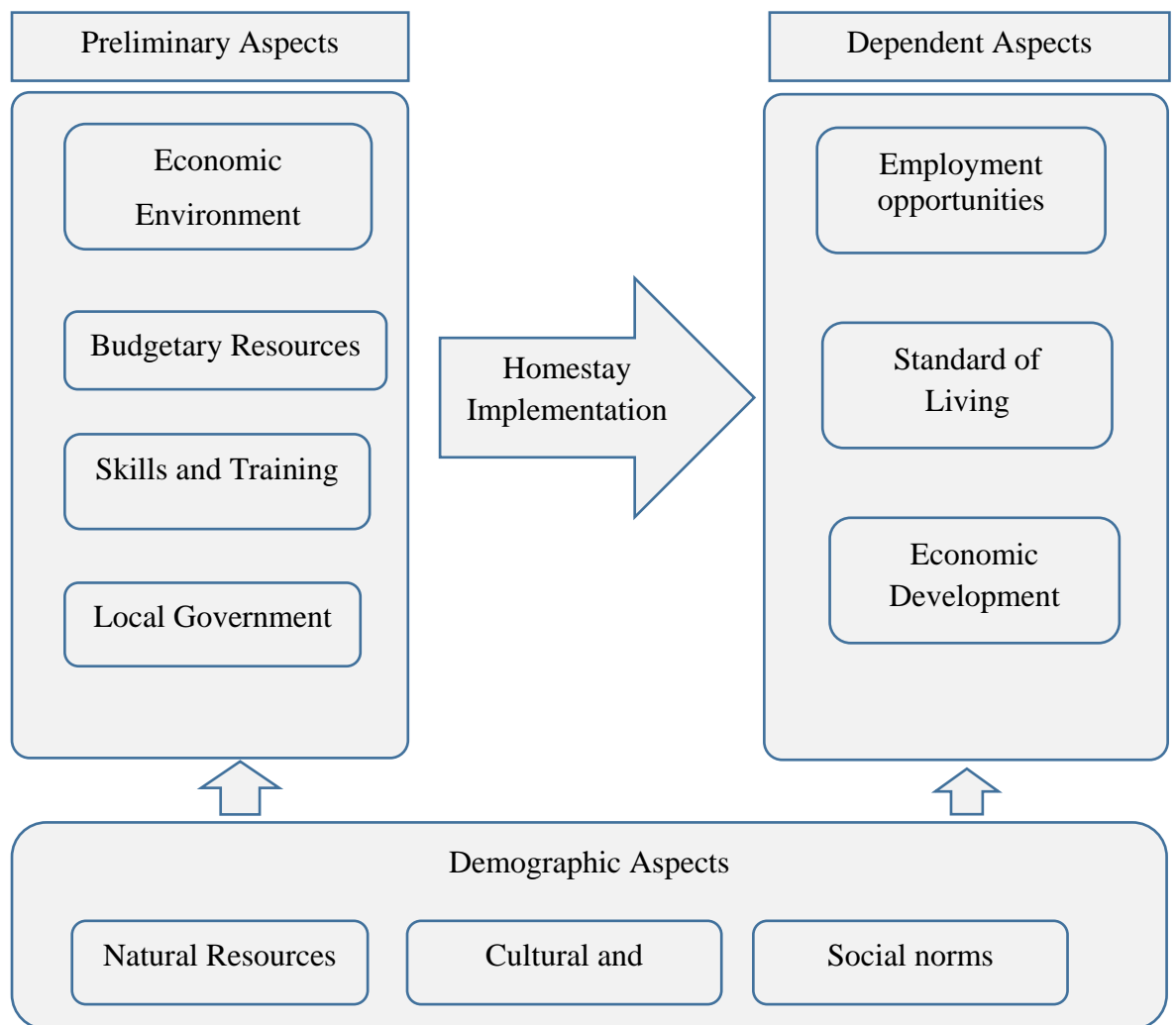


Figure 3: Conceptual framework

3.2 Research Design

Considering the nature of the study being undertaken, qualitative approach of research was implemented. As main objective of the present study was to explore the prospects of rural tourism in the form of homestays in Bhujikot, the research was conducted by directly contacting the local participants and representatives of the local government as well. Apart from this, a subjective interaction with the visitors and tourism enthusiasts was also conducted.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

Primary and secondary, both sources of data were incorporated in the study. Primarily, the local residents and respondents were interviewed in a subjective fashion in order to explore the present status and problems as well as perspectives. Apart from the one to one interviews, secondary source of data was also be used, particularly in establishing the context of the study. Various publications and statistics were cited in order to make the study more practical.

3.4 Data collection

Primarily, the interview tool was used for data collection during the research. Despite being subjective interviews, a preliminary survey questionnaire was used to capture specific data regarding the location.

Key Informant Interview: Key informants from the region including the residents and representatives from local government as well as local experts were interviewed (see Annex for questionnaire). The researcher interviewed five representatives from the local community, three of which were local leaders and subject matter experts while two were house owners.

Individual Interview: Individual interviews refer to the one to one conversation held between the researcher and the respondent in order to explore detailed information about the subject matter (see Annex for questionnaire). The researcher interviewed four individuals regarding their experience in visiting Bhujikot in recent times. The respondents shared their experiences in when they visited the location and what were the services they expected versus what was they provided with.

Reflective notes: Author's firsthand experience of the previous visit to the location, in the form of reflective notes, was used to understand the voices of the local, to make meaning of the recurring themes of the interviews in relation to the author's own experiences etc.

Secondary research: Gathering background/historical data is the first step in any study. Background data for the observation sites was collected, including previously conducted research studies, local government's statistics and national statistics. A secondary research was also conducted, primarily, online in order to explore the data and statistics from published sources. This helped in building the foundation and perspective of the research. These reports provided data on the population distribution and social constructs of the area and also the existence of amenities and other services as perceived by the travelers.

3.5 Population Size, Sample Size and Sampling procedure

The study area including all four settlements belongs to the ward number 2 of Shuklagandaki Municipality. It has the population of 4640 individuals. Out of this universe population size, approximately eighteen houses participated in the homestay operation in recent times, and out of the participants, two owners were contacted randomly.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

There are various ways to analyze qualitative data. Data could be collected and assimilated in various sources formats, but the first step for proper analysis is to organize the data. Once organized, the data is read multiple times following by identification of common ideas and patterns through the process of coding. Repetitive themes appearing in the responses are tracked and the identified codes are constantly updated as the data analysis proceeds.

The following four phases, as suggested by (Crane, 2010) will be followed for the research data analysis.

Observing and searching: This phase includes detailed reading of the qualitative data, in our case transcribed interviews, comments and follow-up queries via email. We

intend to be objective in the observation, and we keep a ‘discovery’ mindset while going through the data rather than prejudging the data.

Sorting and coding: In the second phase, condensed words and phrases are identified to create categories. We use extensive underlining and highlighting so that major points are not missed.

Discovering and coding: We go back and review to identify patterns in the information, which we have just sorted. We try to find the similarities and also differences among the categorized data.

Re-observe and re-read: This is a re-look and retrospective phase in the data analysis. Here we try to notice if there are any linear map or three-dimensional map from the sorted data. We attempt to find new insights from the data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Plagiarism: While several studies and sources were aggregated in developing the foundation of the story, no text were directly used as the author’s own.

Consent: In cases where respondents are directly contacted, consent to use their information and data was taken.

Confidentiality: Depending upon the nature of information used in this research, and also when requested by the respondents, identity of the individuals are kept confidential.

Credit: Due credit have been provided to the respected owner of the information, wherever required.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY AREA AND A PROFILE OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

4.1 Introduction

Nepal contains significant percentages of wildlife, such as 2.04 percent of the world's flowering higher plants and 8.6 percent of its birds. Nepal contains some 5,833 species of gymnosperms and flowering plants with some 315 endemic species of higher plants, 847 bird species, 185 mammal species, 43 amphibian species, 100 reptile species, 656 butterfly species and 185 fresh water fish species have been identified in Nepal. Nepal's combination of stunning natural environment and strong cultural heritage, make it a truly remarkable country for the development of ecotourism. In fact, ecotourism in Nepal tends to blend with adventure tourism with the magnificent mountain peaks attracting trekkers and mountaineers from around the world. Various protected areas have been established in Nepal and play a vital role in ecotourism for the country. Tourism is the backbone and leading sector for the economic development of developing countries like Nepal, the contribution of tourism for the development of national economy is about (4 percent) and 18 percent of total foreign exchange earnings (Sigdel, 2014).

Bhujikot lies in Tanahun district of the Gandaki province in Nepal. The study site belongs to the hilly region of the country and is one of the less accessible location of the recently established municipality. It is primarily a Gurung settlement primarily involved in agriculture and cattle farming, which is a most common involvement in this part of the country.

Visitors can enjoy a 360 degrees panoramic view of the glorious Annapurna region, flowing Seti River and the neo urban settlement of Shuklagandaki towards the south, as well as Madi River and Lamjung region. The climate is pleasant with temperature ranging from 12 degrees centigrade to 25 degrees centigrade. Maximum altitude of the village is approximately 1260 meters above the sea level, where the visitors can climb up to the view tower for their enjoyment. The annual rainfall is 50 cm on an average. Winter brings frost in some days, however, no snowfall has been observed in the location. One can enjoy clear blue sky as well as field fog during the winter season.

4.2 Location

Bhujikot lies in ward number two of the Shuklagandaki municipality located in Tanahun district of Gandaki province in Nepal. The municipality was formed on 18 May 2014 by merging three village development committees: Dhorphirdi, Dulegaunda and Khairenitar. Three more VDCs Thaprek, Raipur and Phirphire were further merged on 5 March 2017. Although it is collectively named Bhujikot at once, the study area actually comprises of four different clustered settlements. The study area can be accessed primarily from three entry points: Khairenitar via Silanghari, Dulegaunda via Bankewa and direct access from Kotre. All of these three main entry points branch from the Prithvi highway.

Road access to the study area is yet to be completed, however a dirt road has been in place which takes the visitors a few hundred meters below the actual settlements. While the road can be comfortably used in dry and winter seasons, in monsoon, however, the access becomes more cumbersome. The local body has allocated NRs 2.5 million for the road improvement project in the current fiscal year.

As communication is the primary backbone of any tourist spot, one needs to ensure that the area is reachable by phone. Being one of the highest spots the area, telecommunications towers of major mobile operators NTC and Ncell are installed, thus making the area easily accessible via phone.

4.3 People

Bhujikot is primarily a mixture of Gurung and Magar community. All households are occupied with agriculture and livestock rearing where in the recent years a significant percentage of the population have also departed for foreign employment. Geographically, the houses are located closely together in one cluster (Umbach, 2008). The Gurung and Magar people who are the majority of population in the study area are an Indigenous People of the Himalayas in central Nepal who trace their ancestry back to Tibet. In a cultural, historical and geographic sense, Gurung reside in a “contact zone” between Buddhism and Hinduism. Although they practice a mixture of Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism and Bön Shamanism, and regard themselves mostly in Indigenous ethnic terms, they also in part retain Hindu caste beliefs about other “castes” with whom they reside in their villages (Pierre Walter, 1986). According to the National Population

and Housing Census of 2011 about 2% of the country's population of 26 million are Gurungs. Despite national policies promoting the rights of Indigenous ethnic groups, roughly 21% of Gurung people are still below the poverty line and face discrimination. However, in comparison to other Indigenous People such as Limbus and upland Kami Dalits (blacksmith caste, formerly of “untouchable” status), Gurungs have a better standard of living and social status, in part because they historically served in the famed Gurkha regiments of the British Army and continue to work as soldiers in the Indian Army. Similarly, the Magars form the largest population among all indigenous ethnic groups and the third largest group among all indigenous and caste groups in Nepal, representing 7.14 percent of the 23 million according to the 2001 census, people in Nepal. Like other groups, they are promoting their peculiar cultural codes such as language, religion, festivals, and dress codes and are demanding a Magarath Autonomous Region (Shyamu Thapa Magarn, 2014).

4.4 Climate

Climate is one of the crucial elements in tourism, as well as human settlement and agricultural cultivation. In a natural habitat without much of the modern infrastructure, accessibility and prospects of any location is directly influenced by the climate of the region. If climate is suitable, possibility of the tourism development is high. The climate in Bhujikot is alpine which has made an appealing atmosphere or cold atmosphere around the year. From Kartik to Chaitra, the weather is cold. Although, Falgun, Chaitra, Baishakh and Jestha are clearest of the months, the place is best visited in any months except during monsoon. The area gets moderate monsoon rain annually. The month of June to August will have the maximum precipitation (rain). The winter is quite cold. Due to its good climate, crops and live stocking production is matched in this study area.

4.5 Vegetation (Flora and Fauna)

While climatic condition dictates the overall flora and fauna of the region, it in turn determines the visual and environmental outlook, hence making an impact on tourist attraction. Diverse kinds of plants can be found in the region, throughout the year. Although the top most section of the study area, namely Bhujikot is close to barren, the low lying area are moderately populated because of the fertile soil. The landscape of

this area is diverse including terraces, slopes and flat lands covered by different types of vegetation. Most of the land is occupied by cash crops, i.e. broom grass, potato, ginger etc. This area is well forested with Katus (chest nut), and Sal (*Shorea Robusta*), Chutro (Nepalese Barberry, *Barberisaristata*, Kagate) etc. Well preserved and groomed community forest in this region has contributed to the beautification of the area.

4.6 Tourist Attractions

With the culturally rich human settlement, Bhujikot offers warm hospitality to the visitors and with the scenic views of the mountains and plains, it offers scenic natural beauty as well.



Figure 4- Panoramic view of the Annapurna range from Bhujikot (Source: Bikas Gurung, Google Maps)

Landscape

Bhujikot offers a clear view of the Annapurna range towards the North West. Visible mountains are Dhaulagiri, Annapurna I & II, Hiuchuli, Machhapuchhre, Annapurna IV, Lamjung Himal and Mount Manaslu. One can see the glimpse of the Pokhara city led by Prithvi highway and also a peeking image of Rupa Lake.

A view tower has been recently constructed in order to facilitate the tourists in viewing the panoramic view.

Trekking / Hiking routes

Identified by the tallest hill in the municipality, Bhujikot currently has a walking trail from three different entry points which ultimately merge at the base of the village settlements. The routes starting from Khairenitar, Dulegaunda and Kotre used to be villagers' access road for their livelihood. The same trails are used these days by enthusiastic hikers from the region.

A few more trekking routes are being proposed by the locals and leaders which are not yet established. The proposed routes take the trekkers from Madi river valley towards Thaprek, a neighboring settlement and Bhujikot settlements further leading towards Pokhara valley.

Another prospective trekking route connects Kotre and Rupakot Resort via Makwanpur and Dewali. "We have identified this route to be a promising one had have been proposing this with the higher authorities since long", a local respondent said.

Socio Cultural aspects



Figure 5 - Scenic view of the traditional houses in Bhujikot (Umbach, 2008)

Socio cultural assets are crucial components to attract tourists in the region. Sites and areas of archeological interests, historical building and monument, place of historical significance, museum, modern culture, political and educational institutions and religious institutions are socio cultural products in any destination, similarly, national festivals, arts, handicrafts, music and folklore, native life and customs are also traditional products (Sigdel, 2014). One can witness these aspects of socio cultural

varieties in the vicinity of Bhujikot so as to lure tourists in visiting the place and also in genuinely interacting with the local culture.

Despite being overshadowed by the most popular tourist hub, Pokhara, this spot can be used as a tranquil pause from the hustle and bustle of the crowded city, while also offering the same, if not better, view to enjoy. Being an ancient settlement, the study area has abundance of ancient houses, temples of historic significance and historical sites.

CHAPTER FIVE: BHUJIKOT HOMESTAY AND ITS COMPLIANCE WITH THE HOMESTAY GUIDELINE

The homestay, though referred to as Bhujikot in this study, actually comprises of 4 separate villages, namely Dagaam, Bhujikot, Isthantok and Chheu Dagaam. All of these villages are historic settlements with their own unique cultural identities.

Of those four settlements, locals have attempted to establish a homestay service in each of them through different point of time. In the most recent attempt, locals at the Dagaam village had also initiated the process of establishing a homestay service.

5.1 Homestay Guideline 2010

The homestay operation guideline was approved and issued by Nepal government on July 2010. The guideline not only elaborates the prerequisites of a standardized homestay, but also provides a short overview of best practices and recommended services.

The guideline defines homestay as a service established privately or in a group with the objective of providing accommodation, food and other services to the tourists. The objective of the homestay operation are to promote rural tourism, enable locals to participate in tourism activities, increase income of the community, increase employment of the locals, educate the tourists about local culture and heritage, not only provide accommodation but also let the tourists experience the local culture and cuisines, and provide simplistic accommodation services to the tourists in an urban setting.

The guideline identifies two categories of homestays that comply with the minimum criteria (see 5.2). The first refers to the rural community homestay where at least five independent owners establish a homestay service as a group while the second refers to the similar operation established in an urban setting to be known as private homestay. The guideline also enlists various touristic activities that can be conducted as a part of the homestay operation, such as jungle trek, eco trek, and sightseeing.

The hosts are expected to welcome the guests with cultural dances and flower garland. A provision has to be in place to conduct group activities such as festivals, fairs, rallies and large group activities. The tourists are also encouraged to participate in such ceremonies. A provision needs to be place to showcase the cultural artifacts and locally produced handicrafts, a community museum and also a tour facility to observe local flora and fauna.

The guideline specifies the registration as well as operation process of the homestay service. In order to register the homestay, a group of at least five independent house owners need to apply at tourism industry department of the tourism and civil aviation ministry, including a written commitment to operate the homestay. Upon the receipt of application, relevant authorities shall initiate the inspection and complete the process. A committee of at least five members shall be constructed, and depending upon the number of participating houses, additional six members can be added. The guideline also specifies a list of duties and responsibilities to be carried out by the committee and subsequently the operators of homestay which includes but not limited to ensure touristic activities be conducted, registration of tourists, maintain accounts, conduct regular monitoring, advertise and promote tour packages, preserve and maintain local tradition and culture, manage health issues of tourists, maintain uniformity of menu and services, and handle all other relevant issues of the entire homestay business.

5.2 Compliance

In order to operate a sustainable homestay operation, the local committee needs to ascertain that the homestay meets the compliance criteria set by the government.

Minimum criteria for a homestay operation

Apart from orienting the stakeholders on the operation and registration procedure of homestay service, the guideline also prescribes specific minimum criteria that has to be

met by a prospective homestay operators. The guideline is subdivided into four further aspects, as described below (see Table).

Houses, Rooms and Beds

The guideline recommends having at least five homestay units owned by different individuals and requires to have at least one separate room for guests while one homestay unit can have a maximum of 4 rooms in it. Each of the rooms can have a maximum of two beds. The floor is expected to be carpeted or a mat shall be present in the floor. There must be a doormat at the entrance of rooms. Regarding the bed, it specifically prescribes white bedsheet as well as white covers for blankets / duvets, we assume, for consistency and cleanliness. The room shall be well lit and should have a lamp – either electric or local oil lamp. The guideline also recommends to have a wall painting or some sort of decoration as an attractive art piece. The room shall be smoke free, particularly, the smoke from the cooking area should not reach the rooms.

Toilet and Bathroom

The guideline prescribes a well-functioning toilet to be available in the homestay while also having a provision of taking a shower in privacy. The premises should also have sufficient bathroom utilities such as bucket, mug, soap and towels for the guests.

Kitchen and dining provisions

The guideline specifically instructs the homestay units to be away from cattle shed, poultry pen or any sort of backyard cattle animals. The homestay service should provide safe drinking water. Regarding the dining procedure, it recommends the operators to offer local cuisine, with additional cuisines of choice. Seating arrangement should be according to the guests' preference. Most importantly, the guideline prescribes the homestay operators to maintain an accessible menu with uniform as well as visible pricing.

Health, hygiene and safety

The guideline instructs the operators to ensure that homestay units are free from bugs of any kind. The water and drainage areas should not be left open and there should be a provision of community health care. The guideline recommends the operators to

provide eco-friendly tourism activity, conservation of heritage, access to public toilets and emphasizes on tree plantation.

Particulars	Compliance
Houses, Rooms and Beds	
At least five homestay units owned by different individuals	Yes
At least one separate room for guests	Yes
Maximum 4 rooms in a homestay unit	Yes
One room can have maximum two beds	Yes
The floor should be carpeted or a mat should be present	No
Doormat at the door entrance	Yes
White bedsheet as well as white covers in blankets / duvets	No
Clothes hanger on the walls or behind the doors	Yes
Provision of lamps (electricity or candles or traditional oil lamps)	Yes
Cooking smoke should not reach the bedroom	NA
Preferred if the bedroom has beautiful paintings depicting local culture and tradition	No
Dustbin	Yes
If possible, a pair of slippers for the guests	No
If possible, half of life sized mirrors in the room	Unconfirmed
If possible, tea table in the room	No
If possible, two chairs in the room	No
Toilet and Bathroom	
Well-functioning toilet	Yes
Provision of taking a shower in privacy	Unconfirmed
Availability of essential bath utilities such as bucket, mug, soaps and towels	Yes
Kitchen and Dining provisions	
Cattle sheds or poultry pens should not be placed in close proximity of the guest rooms	No

Cooking service without much smoke (presence of improved stove)	No
Safe drinking water (filtered and/or boiled)	Unconfirmed
Provision of local cuisine	Yes
Provision to be stayed in folded leg position (for Nepalese)	Yes
Preferred to have dining tables for foreigners	Yes
Accessible menu with uniform and visible pricing	No
Health, hygiene and safety	
Homestay units to be safe and free from all kinds of bugs	Unconfirmed
Provision of community health care	Yes
Water and sewer drainage should be closed	No
Eco friendly tourism activity, conservation of heritage, access to public toilets, plantation (reforestation)	Unconfirmed

Table 3: Assessment of Bhujikot homestay according to the homestay guideline

CHAPTER SIX: CHALLENGES OF BHUJIKOT HOMESTAY

While the prospects are promising, Bhujikot has several challenges to face before becoming a sustainable homestay service. Inaccessibility is the most prominent of them. According to a local Bhakta Bahadur Gurung, despite of these potentialities, Bhujikot is still untraveled destination amid travel enthusiasts. “Bhujikot situated seven kilometers away from Dulegauda and Kotre Bazar. The influx of tourist is high only in winter and holidays. In monsoon, this place turns into desert without any tourists (Dhungana, 2019). And the reason for this is the difficulty tourists have to face throughout their journey due to vulnerable road condition in monsoon,” Gurung lamented. The locals emphasized on the infrastructure development.

6.1 Transportation

While communication access in the region is fairly good, the transportation and road access is what the place needs the most. “Infrastructures couldn’t be added as local authority is disinterest in the developmental work for this place. Without proper infrastructure, it is impossible to attract tourist toward this place. So, local government should allocate proper budget for the development of infrastructures.” (Dhungana, 2019). As it appears in the sentiments of the locals, the lack of proper road which can be accessed all year round is the major challenge.

6.2 Accommodation and Sanitation

Being an unstructured attempt by smaller number of households, the accommodation facility at present is very limited. Any guests arriving in the area should inform the relevant house owner and ensure that minimal preparation is done. Discussion with several visitors indicated that there is severe lack of quality accommodation services. The situation is mostly the same with sanitation. Being a traditional settlement, with poorly built housing structures, the issue of drainage and cleanliness is most prominent. While the cleanliness might reflect the socio economic status of the residents, it is equally important that, if visitors and tourists are to be attracted to the homestay, we need to make sure the visitors’ expectations are met.

6.3 Internet services

Access to internet is also a problem in the area. Although ISPs are smoothly operating in the dense settlements such as Dulegaunda, Khairenitar and Kotre, along the Prithvi highway, direct links and cable internet service is not available in Bhujikot area.

6.4 Information Center

As of now, there is no single institution or personnel who can act as a contact person for the homestay services. The locals who frequent the place during dry seasons contact their acquaintance and make required arrangements, however if a new visitor wants to visit the place, there is no way of getting all the information they need. Usually, local representatives and the ward chairperson communicate with the visitors, but that too, is from their personal capacity. Hence it is of utmost importance that a center be established along with relevant staffs who can relay information when needed.

6.5 Advertisement and outreach activities / promotions

The homestay services need to be first established via legal process and have to be operated according to the set standards, but it is also equally important that the information about Bhujikot must be circulated to wider audience in the form of advertisements. The advertisements can vary in modality – from web based advertisements to targeted advertisements according to occasion. Natural and cultural highlights can be presented as the attraction and can be placed in various locations.

6.6 Local Issues

One of the important challenge in establishing Bhujikot as a sustainable and successful homestay is that the proposal itself is never taken seriously by the local government. Though it is not only the responsibility of the government, it makes a huge difference whether or not basic amenities and services are ensured. Huge projects such as road expansion, water supply and sanitation cannot be implemented only from the efforts of the local residents. It requires a larger coordination among government entities and also needs collaborative effort from neighboring villages. If one village grows, the rest follow.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Major Findings

In a country like Nepal where natural beauty surpasses the visitors' expectation and cultural warmth mesmerizes tourists, tourism can be the economic backbone for development. While elsewhere, a huge investment is required to transform a normal terrain into a touristy attraction, in Nepal, most of the work is done by nature. Being naturally located in a tough geographical zone, Nepal can gain a good deal if such difficult terrain is instead treated as treasures. With minimal infrastructure and good orientation, Nepal can reap the benefits of its natural beauty and historical heritage.

Following the same line, with the insights from the experts and locals, an assessment was made on the prospect of developing Bhujkot as a tourist destination. Major findings of this study are summarized below:

- i) Number of tourists visiting the area is increasing in the yearly basis, but most of the visitors are locals who are already familiar with the route and attractions of the place. Most of the tourists visit the location for a one day hike.
- ii) Though some households welcome guests and offer accommodation and food services, there is no systematic and sustainable approach to operate the homestay.
- iii) Autumn, spring and winter are the best seasons to visit Bhujkot.
- iv) Though track roads (dirt / gravel roads) are constructed, the place is largely inaccessible via vehicle during monsoon season.
- v) Major attractions of the location are 360 degree panoramic view of the Annapurna range as well as Seti River, Madi River and Rupa Lake. A modern view tower is recently built which is one of the most visited spots.
- vi) The Gurung and Magar cultural heritage is preserved and the outlook of the settlement is still largely untouched by urban design.
- vii) Modern health facility is not present.
- viii) Although visitors frequent the place, tourism is still not the main source of income.

7.2 Conclusions

Tourism is a sustainable industry for a country like Nepal, where though modern amenities are not available one can enjoy diverse natural beauty. Bhujikot, one of the four village settlements in the study area, lies in the hilly region of the country, thus ensuring a balanced climate and pleasant weather. With rich cultural heritage, and diverse flora and fauna, there is a huge prospect in developing Bhujikot as a homestay destination if some of the basic infrastructure along with touristic awareness is developed in the area.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the study, following recommendations are made for the establishment and promotion of Bhujikot as a sustainable homestay destination in Tanahun.

- i) **Accessibility and well-functioning roads.**
Transportation and access to the location needs to be enhanced. Though there are track roads already built up to the base of the village, the road needs to be upgraded so that the site can be accessed all-round the year.
- ii) **Registered and sustainable homestay with standardized menus**
In order to identify itself as a tourist spot the homestay service should be legally registered and all the minimum criteria set by the homestay guideline should be met. Further, in order to ascertain quality services, the recommendations made by the guideline as well as best practices from other successful homestays should be replicated.
- iii) **Community health care service**
Health service is as essential as any other basic services in a community. In order to make sure the guests are taken good care of during the stay, the community shall establish a trustworthy health service within the area.
- iv) **Well-marked trekking trail along with rest stops on the way**
Not only the access roads, but also the trekking routes should be constructed, maintained and well-marked. While large projects like black topped roads

cannot be completed only from community inputs, relatively smaller initiatives such as trail marking can be done by the community itself.

v) Tourist information centers and contact points

In order to facilitate the interested tourists and visitors, the community should establish tourist information centers at the community as well as all major entry points. The information center shall be available during all times either in person or electronically using the online support system. Specific contact persons can also be designated so that the visitors can get in touch with follow up queries.

vi) Advertisements

Advertisement is an influential way to attract potential tourists. In large number of cases, the tourists do not visit a place just because they are not aware of them. If advertised properly, larger audience can be aware of the services provided by the homestay along with its attractions.

vii) Cultural package

Specific packages of cultural tour or entertainment activities can be developed so that the visitors can be educated about the local culture and traditions. This will not only entertain the visitors, but also educate them about the importance of local culture and heritage.

viii) Cleanliness and hygiene

As one of the basic requirements of the homestay service, and also as prescribed by the guideline, the community must ensure cleanliness of the area and maintain hygiene in the services provided, especially while preparing and serving food.

ix) Retention of original architecture.

Not all new things are beautiful. The community is recommended to retain the original structure and architecture of the buildings and historic monuments. It is observed in modern times that, in the name of renovation, a lot of traditional architecture are replaced by concrete structures.

x) Provision of security

The homestay service and the community shall ensure a permanent placement of security services in the area. This would not only ensure security of the visitors and community, but also act as a rescue services if anything goes wrong.

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Annex 1: Survey Questionnaire for Visitors

Questionnaire for Visitors

1. Name (optional)
2. Address:
3. Age:
4. Purpose of the visit:
5. Date of visit:
6. Expectations from the homestay
7. Ranking of the services
 - a. Out of 10, how would you rank the quality and service of the food?
 - b. Out of 10, how would you rank the quality and service of the accommodation?
 - c. Out of 10, how would you rank the quality and service of the hospitality?
 - d. Out of 10, how would you rank the quality and service of the information availability?
 - e. Out of 10, how would you rank the quality of the hiking/trekking trail?
8. What did you enjoy the most from the visit?
9. What was the most difficult part of the visit?
10. What would you recommend for someone who wants to visit Bhujikot in the future?

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire for Key Informant Interviews

Interview Questionnaire for Key Informant Interviews

1. Name:
2. Designation:
3. Address:
4. Age:
5. Do you own a house in Bhujikot?
6. Do you also operate a homestay service in Bhujikot?
7. What are the positive prospects of Bhujikot homestay?
8. What are the challenges of Bhujikot homestay?
9. Can you elaborate the process and progress of establishing Bhujikot homestay?
10. What is the community's role so far?
11. What has the central as well as local government done in this regard?